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The Way of a Maid in Zululand

By JAMES B. McCORD, M. D.
of Durban

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A QUARTERLY

Foreword

Another number on Africa! But Africa is being stressed this year, as it is the subject of reading and of study courses in the churches of all our missionary denominations.

And here is a good story, which breathes of Africa in every line, but is full of human interest and of the universal sentiments. It is one more proof that truth is stranger than fiction, for a novelist hardly would have felt free to solve a tangle of difficulties thus simply or to make all turn out so well for his several characters.

We commend Dr. McCord's story to all who are interested in Africa; and to all friends of the American Board; and, in particular, of the Woman's Board, which maintains Inanda Seminary.

W. E. S.

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THE WAY OF A MAID IN ZULULAND

By James B. McCord, M. D., of Durban.

The South African sun has taken the early morning chill from the air, the dew has disappeared before the warm rays and the wedding party looks out on a bright day. The bridegroom stands on the gently sloping hillside below the kraal awaiting the coming of the bride's party, for the wedding is about to take place. Presently from over the hill come the bride and her friends, dancing, singing and bearing gifts to the bridegroom's father and brothers. When the bride's party arrives, the festivities begin. Her father stands forth and tells in a loud voice what a dutiful daughter she has always been,

Some of the Wedding Guests.

how she has worked in the garden and raised corn and beans and potatoes and *izindhlubu* and *amaselwa* and all the vegetables the men are so fond of. And her friends shout "Wow! Wow! What a wonderful girl!" Then her father goes on to call attention to how fat she is and how beautiful, while she tries to look unconcerned and her friends again shout their approval. Then he shows the presents, which she has brought to the bridegroom's father and brothers, and tells what a clever girl she is to be able to make such pretty and useful things, amid further applause of her friends.

After her father has enlarged on her good points for some time, he becomes thirsty and the others are thirsty also, so the beer is passed around and all partake. Then the bridegroom's father steps forward and tells how they have given fifteen cattle for this girl and how she should work hard and raise enough food for such a good husband to show that she is worth so much. Then he enlarges on the good points of his son while the young man stands out unabashed, for he has been married several times be-

One of the Dressy Couples.

fore and is not nervous. Moreover his other wives are even now present to hear his praise and to see who their new comrade is to be.

By this time the afternoon is well begun and all have had several drinks of beer, which makes them feel happy, and the dancing proceeds.

The bride's party dances and the groom's party dances, trying to see which can dance the better. Afterwards each young man, with his spears and shield, prances out alone, jumps high in the air, brandishes his spears and shield and tries to show everyone what a strong and brave and warlike young man he is.

As evening approaches the bride's girl friends gather around her as if to protect her, while the young men gather around the groom, dressed in their finest beads and feathers, and rush to capture the bride. She is at last captured in spite of the mock defense and the bridegroom leads her off in triumph and the wedding ceremony is over. But the celebration is not over, for the guests stay and drink beer until it is all gone, and that may be several days.

The young man who won the most admiration from the spectators was the groom's younger brother, Mtetwa. He jumped the highest and was the handsomest and put up the bravest appearance generally. He had no wives as yet but all knew that he was about to go to Durban to work for the money with which to get a wife, and many wondered who the lucky girl was to be. But Mtetwa told no one. Perhaps he had not fully decided himself. But he smiled at everyone, for he was young and healthy

and happy and life was before him. He intended to get many wives and be a great man in his tribe. Perhaps he would even come to be one of the councillors of the great king, Dinizulu, and that would be a high honor indeed. So, as he danced, he smiled and laughed and was happy, and Nomaceki and Busisiwe looked at him with admiration shining from their eyes, for was he not indeed a brother to be proud of? They had joined in the dance, but they liked best to pause when they could and watch Mtetwa.

A Zulu Dandy.

Mtetwa went to Durban soon after the wedding and his two small sisters went about their daily duties and pleasures. One morning several years after the wedding the two girls took their hoes as the day was breaking and went out into the garden to their usual work. As they bent over their work their thoughts were busy. Nomaceki was the older and more thoughtful, though not so large and strong as Busisiwe, and her thoughts were wandering off to the large shady trees on the other side of the hill under which David and his wife, Daisy, had started a school and where David preached every Sunday and told wonderful stories which she had never heard before. She had been to see the school once and to the preaching ser-

vice twice; and she and Busisiwe were going today really to study in the school, for they would like to see how the books talked and told such strange stories.

Was Busisiwe thinking about going to school? Oh no. She was thinking about more important things. She had been chosen for the *isigodhla* of the king, Dinizulu, and the time was approaching for her to go to the royal kraal to be under the tuition of the queen mother. She had agreed to go to school with Nomaceki, but her thoughts were in far off Zululand.

About ten o'clock the sun became hot, so the girls hid their hoes in the bushes and sat down to their breakfast of boiled sweet potatoes. Then they went round the hill to the school-tree. They approached somewhat timidly, for there were twenty pair of eyes looking at them, big and little eyes and middle-sized eyes. Daisy was teaching this morning and she welcomed the girls kindly and gave them a seat on the ground, for the logs and stumps were all occupied. Then they saw a little girl stand up and look inside a book — Busisiwe had never seen a book before — and tell a story about a little boy and his dog. The girls slipped up behind the little girl who was reading and looked over her shoulder to see where the story came from, but they saw nothing except some crooked lines in the book. Then they listened carefully to see if they could detect where the story came from, but they could hear no sounds whatever coming from the book. Then they sat down and gazed gravely at the teacher, for there were many wonders in the world and this must be one of them. After some time the teacher came to

them with a chart and set them to studying their letters, and thus the girls started to school.

It was the beginning of a new life to Nomaceki and Busisiwe. They did not neglect their gardens, but every morning, after their work was done, they would slip over to the school-tree and pronounce their A B C, and on

The Girl with the Hoe.

Sunday they would come with the other children and a few grown people and listen to David as he told of Jesus and the wonderful things that he said. And little by little new thoughts and new feelings came into their hearts and the pleasures of the old life were forgotten

in the joy of the new life, for Nomaceki and Busisiwe both became Christians and looked on the world with new eyes. Busisiwe forgot the honor that was to be hers when she should go to the kraal of the great king. Both girls were completely happy.

But the happy days were not to last long. The English and the Boers were still fighting. The Boer army was approaching from the north and the English army was approaching from the south. There was a Boer outpost not far from David's home. As he was going one night to a neighbor's kraal to see a child that was sick, he had to pass near the Boer sentry. The sentry called out to him to halt, but David was very deaf and did not hear, so he kept right on. The sentry thought that he was an enemy and shot him, so Daisy was left without a husband and the girls lost their teacher and pastor.

Then the Boers and the English met in a terrible battle near by, and the natives were in terror lest they should all be killed. The Boers were defeated and their women and children were gathered together by the English to be taken down to the coast to the concentration camps there.

But worst of all to Busisiwe, she heard that the messengers from the great Dinizulu were coming to take her for the chief. Three months before this would have been good news to her, but now it struck terror to her heart, for she was sure that she would not be allowed to be a Christian at the chief's kraal.

Moreover, at her husband's death, Daisy had decided to return to her father's home on the coast, so the school

must be closed and perhaps never opened again near their home. They talked things over between themselves and they talked things over with Daisy. She told them that if they could once get down to Inanda to the mission school under Mrs. Edwards, they would be taken care of and taught to read, and could hear all about Jesus. But that was hundreds of miles away and the country was full of soldiers and they did not know the way. But Busisiwe must do something, and what to do she did not know.

As the three were discussing the matter and almost deciding that there was nothing to do, they saw a party of English soldiers pass with a large number of Boer women and children in wagons on their way to the coast. As they looked the same thought came to each. They would follow the soldiers and so find their way to Maritzburg. From there Daisy knew the rest of the way, and if they kept near the soldiers they would be comparatively safe.

The next morning they went to work especially early, really before light. Instead of working, however, they left their hoes in the field and followed the soldiers, in company with Daisy. It was a long, hard journey, for Maritzburg was over two hundred miles away and they must walk the whole distance and must keep up with the wagons. At night they would sleep in the high grass by the wayside or in some patch of dense woods. They were terribly afraid of the dark but they were more afraid of being discovered by their father and brothers who would surely follow them. At every hilltop they

looked back carefully to see if they were being pursued, but day followed day and there was no sign of pursuers, and Maritzburg was now only two days off.

That night they slept at a native kraal, for they began to think that they would not be followed. The next morning, as was their custom, they hid by the roadside to see the troops and wagons go by before they took the road themselves. Just as they were about to step into the road after the troops had passed, they saw two men approaching in haste and they drew back trembling when they recognized their father and brother. They lay very still in the grass while the two men hurried on toward the troops. They learned afterward that their father had waited long for them the night after they had left home. The next morning he had enquired for them at the neighbors. It was not until the second day that he had discovered that they had gone after the troops, and he overtook the troops the day before they reached Maritzburg.

After that the girls were afraid to travel by the road again or to follow the troops, so they struck out across the hills for Inanda, eighty miles away. They asked their way from place to place and without further adventure reached the end of their journey.

The afternoon's work at Inanda was drawing to a close and the girls were looking forward to the hour of recreation before supper when they could leave off speaking in the difficult English and could talk to each other in their own Zulu. Mrs. Edwards was out in the orchard with a dozen girls overseeing the digging of the last of

some holes where she intended to set out orange trees the next day. She had devoted the last thirty years to the Zulu girls at Inanda and now, though some time past the allotted three score years and ten, her "eye was not dim nor" her "natural force abated." As she directed the work of the girls, she glanced from time to time toward the hills where she could see three girls approach-

Inanda Seminary.

ing and they walked as though they had traveled far. Daisy led them up to Mrs. Edwards with her greeting "We wish you good afternoon, Queen lady," while the two girls followed timidly. For the first time in their lives they felt uncomfortable in their heathen blankets, for the school girls all wore nice clean dresses. Mrs. Edwards smiled a greeting on Daisy, but her smile had an added warmth as she turned toward the two girls behind. "And

who are these?" she asked. "These are two friends of mine who want to be Christians, so they have come to you," Daisy replied simply. The school girls had taken the opportunity to stop their work and stare at the newcomers, but Mrs. Edwards turned toward them a moment. "Keep on with your digging," she said, "it has not been so very long since you were all newcomers yourselves." At the mild rebuke, the girls ducked their heads and began to dig most diligently. Mrs. Edwards walked a little way toward the school buildings with Daisy and her companions and directed them to the office of Miss Phelps, the principal of the school.

The girls were quickly given their places in the school

Ironing at Inanda.

and soon felt very much at home. The first thing they did that evening after supper, was to get pen and paper and with the help of Daisy write a letter to their brother Mtetwa. They learned that he had been converted and had gone to the school at Amanzimtoti to study and that he had taken the name Amon, in order that he might be known by a Christian name. They told him that they were at Inanda and asked him to send word to the folks at home that they were safe. When their father passed them on the road, as they lay hidden in the grass, they had seen a look on his face that troubled them, for they loved him dearly. He had not been well for some months and the long, hard trip in pursuit of them and the fear and anxiety for them had made him look so sick that they were almost sorry they had run away. But the stern look on their brother's face made them afraid to show themselves. Now they tried to send word home that would take all anxiety from their father's mind.

An Anxious Father.

When he received their letter, Amon, as we shall now call him, came at once to see them and sent word to his father that they were safe and that he would take good care of them. So the girls were established at school and the anxiety at home was relieved.

They were now happy, but their troubles were not yet over. Nomaceki's health began to fail. The dreaded *isifuba,* or chest trouble, had attacked her. She became thin and began to cough and was soon too weak to walk. Then Amon came and took her to Amanzimtoti where he could look after her and where the mission doctor could see her. The doctor's wife took her into her own home where she could feed her and nurse her. After a time, Nomaceki began to improve and in a few months she could go back to school again. But she repeatedly became sick on the coast, so that at last the doctor told her that she must return home to the hills and mountains where she was born. But Busisiwe remained at Inanda.

Although Nomaceki felt it was a great trial that she could not continue her studies, she did not complain but lived a true Christian life at home. She told her younger sisters all about Inanda. She told her parents about Jesus. She went from kraal to kraal telling about her Saviour, and although only a Zulu girl, she began to preach. After a time she had a little body of Christians about her, ready to be formed into a church when her brother Amon should finish his studies in the theological school and come home to preach. After several years, her parents both became Christians and united with the others in

their services. Then Nomaceki thought that life was very full of joy.

But other troubles were in store for Amon. While he was in theological school his oldest brother died and his five wives became the property of his next brother who already had three wives. Then this second brother died and the eight wives were inherited by Amon who was the only remaining son, and this happened just as he was ready to go home to begin preaching. Now Amon being a Christian didn't want eight wives. He didn't want even one wife yet. But the eight wives wanted Amon, and they sent word to him, calling him to come home and accept what his good fortune had sent him, for according to Zulu custom and English law they were really his wives, and a Zulu obeys Zulu custom and English law. He could not go home and be a polygamist, and, if he went home to preach, the eight wives would claim him. He didn't know what to do. He went to the missionary for advice, but the missionary could not solve the dif-

Wives are Taxed in Zululand.

ficulty, for Amon did not feel that he could honorably repudiate the wives and so bring disgrace on his family, and he couldn't accept them. So he refused to go home and hoped that a way out of the difficulty would appear.

Meanwhile the government tax and the rent for the land on which the wives lived became due. This amounted to about ten dollars for each wife and altogether made a very large sum for a Zulu man who had no money. Amon could not go home and could not earn the necessary money by preaching, so he went to Durban to work for the money. Amon was discouraged.

A few months later he came to his missionary with a radiant face and told him the rest of the story. "I am so happy," he said, "and yet I feel very humble. For I am a man and strong and have been going to school for many years, and was even ready to go out and preach to my people, but when this trouble came upon me I was completely overcome and did not know what to do. But God has shown to Nomaceki, my little sister, what He has withheld from me, for she was the more worthy, and she has found the way out of my difficulty for me. She took my wives, when my brothers died, had them come to her hut every morning for an hour, read the Bible to them and taught them to read for themselves and told them about Jesus. Now they also have become Christians and have consented to go to their fathers' homes and I am free." And Amon sat and smiled and smiled and smiled, for he was happy because he could now go home and preach the gospel.

When Amon was about to leave for home, he felt

troubled about leaving Busisiwe and her younger sisters so far from home without any man of the family near to look after them. But at Amanzimtoti he had met Simon, who came from near his home and the two became fast friends. So he brought Simon to the doctor's wife, at whose house all the sisters spent their time when not at

The Inanda Laundry.

school, and introduced him, saying that he was to be in the place of a brother to Busisiwe and her sisters while he himself was away. This commission Simon fulfilled most faithfully and willingly.

He was a brother to Busisiwe and her sisters for a year. At the end of that time he went home for vacation and had a long talk with Amon. As a result of that talk, both seemed much pleased and Simon sat down to write

a letter to Busisiwe. Now it is against the rules for a girl at Inanda to receive letters from a young man and Simon knew this. He therefore wrote to Miss Phelps, explaining that Amon had given his consent, and asked her permission to write to Busisiwe, saying that he wished to marry her. In his letter to Miss Phelps he enclosed a letter to Busisiwe telling her all this and a great deal more, which we do not need to repeat, as it was confidential. But when Busisiwe read her letter, she was the happiest girl in the school, for she had come to know Simon well. She read the letter many times, but she had never written to a young man and she didn't know exactly how to answer the letter. Besides she had heard one girl severely scolded for becoming engaged while she was in school. Moreover, if she became engaged the other girls might tease her about it, for Zulu girls do

A Christian Wedding in Zululand.

sometimes actually tease each other. And there may have been other reasons besides, for who can tell what is way down deep in a girl's heart. At any rate, Simon waited long and had no answer and he was in despair.

Miss Phelps had observed that Busisiwe had not written any letter since receiving Simon's, and the days were passing, so after a few days she called her into her office, and asked her if she was going to marry Simon. Busisiwe hung her head to hide her blushes.

"I don't know," she said.

"Haven't you told him yet?"

Busisiwe confessed that she had not written to him yet. Then Miss Phelps took her gently in hand and explained that it was not right to keep such a fine young man waiting in uncertainty for so long, and that she must write to him and tell him either "yes" or "no."

Busisiwe thought about this for a moment and then said "I am afraid to say 'yes,' and I really don't want to say 'no.' "

After some diplomatic encouragement she finally sat down and answered the letter and the answer was eminently satisfactory to Simon, and also to herself.

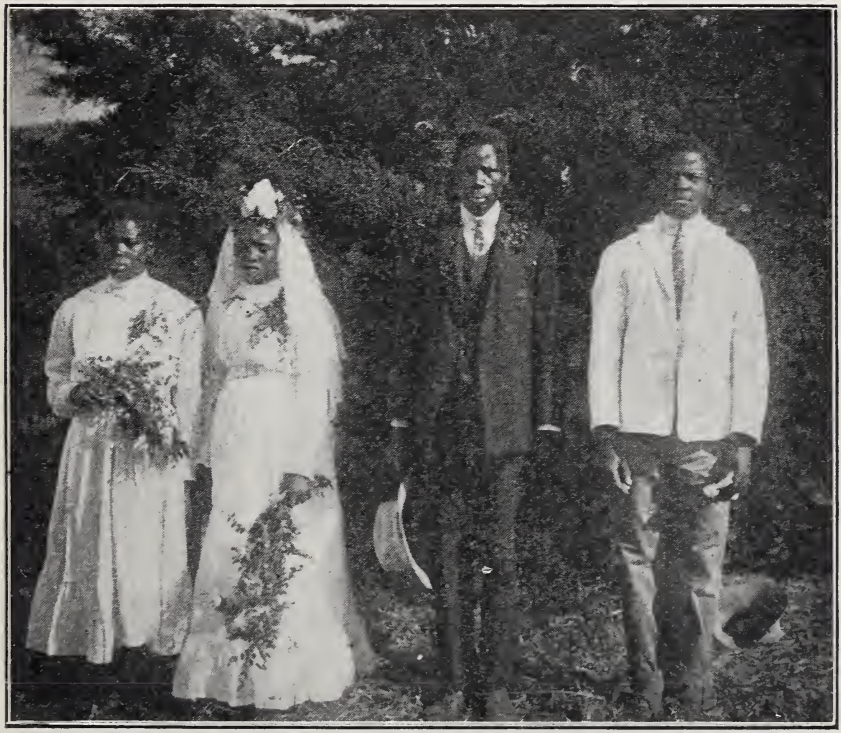
Before they could be married, Simon must work to get the money for the presents which he must give to her parents and Busisiwe must work to get the money for her wedding clothes, so they must both leave school. Busisiwe came to the doctor's wife to work and learn how to keep house while Simon went away to Johannesburg to work for the money for the wedding. Just before

the doctor and his wife left for America on their furlough, they received the following letter from Simon, who was then working in Johannesburg.

"Dear Queen Lady—I write to ask concerning your health. I am well. But I write to thank you for being a mother to Busisiwe. I beg your pardon. I ask you to forgive me for marrying her before you come back to be at the wedding. Because I can't wait, I will marry her at Easter time.

It is I, your obedient servant,

SIMON KUBHEKA."



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